

WASHINGTON -- Today on the House Floor Republicans and Democrats sparred over passage of the Emergency Supplemental Appropriation Act.

The Republican-crafted bill contains offsets that Democrats deem unacceptable such as cuts in funding for disaster relief.

The following is Congressman John W. Olver's statement on the House Floor:

"I support disaster relief for our farmers and their families, who have been devastated by pests and drought."

"I support economic and military assistance for Jordan " to ensure our ally is able to participate in the Gulf War."

"And, I support aid for Central America " to help our southern neighbors in Guatemala and El Salvador."

"The havoc wreaked on Central America by hurricane Mitch is overwhelming " 9,000 dead, 9 million displaced."

"If, at any time, in any place, statistics alone portrayed a situation as an emergency, it would be here."

"It would be now " across the heartland of the United States, where rural Americans are losing their homes and livelihoods."

(more)

"But, this bill neither treats the disaster in Central America nor the crisis in the rural Midwest."

"This bill does not provide emergency funds to meet our obligations. Instead, this bill provides for offsets."

"In our efforts to mitigate current disasters " at home and abroad " we cannot afford to cause additional suffering."

œOne of the most dangerous offsets included in this bill is the cut in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation programs.

œLast year, Congress provided the Energy Department \$525 million to dismantle nuclear warheads.

œThis \$525 million supports two of the most important swords-into-plowshares agreements reached with Russia and the United Kingdom.

œ\$325 million of the FY 1999 Appropriation will be used to purchase Russian stockpiles of nuclear weapons.

œThese funds will also keep Russia's nuclear scientists working at home, on commercial projects.

œThe other \$200 million will be used to implement a bilateral plutonium agreement " and aid in dismantling nuclear weapons.

œThis \$200 million is not only necessary to enable us to live-up to our end of the bilateral plutonium agreement, but also to ensure the safety of the nuclear weapons.

œThe \$150 million cut in these two non-proliferation programs, which is included as an offset in the bill, would severely impact our ability to meet our obligations.

œLast week, 317 of my colleagues were concerned enough about the dangers of nuclear proliferation to vote against the bill.

œToday, I ask all of my colleagues to consider the costs of rescinding this \$150 million, and the impact it would have on our national security.

œIf we are serious about eliminating nuclear threats to our national security, we need not spend money on offsets.

œI urge my colleagues not to cut into nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation programs, and to support the full funding of these programs.

March 24, 1999

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